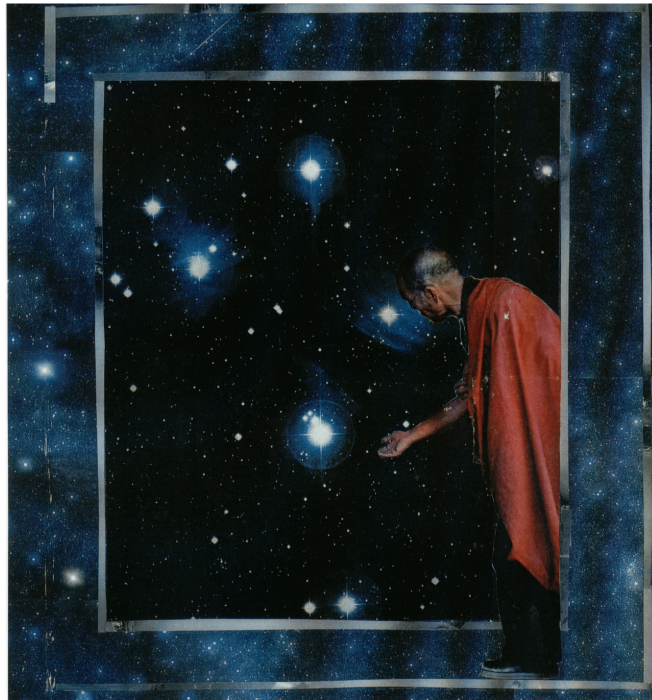


# I Should be in Chains



Kathy Fisher



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## dialogue

*Dialogue*

the Dalai Lama says

*Dialogue. Start them young*

*in school. Tell the children.*

*Dialogue.*

He smiles. bows, palms pressed  
together.

A kiss from Alanis Morissette  
soft on his crinkled cheek

One in six Tibetans dead

And yet, he smiles

to a standing *oh*

an Eastern realized

being

Man is born free

would he agree?

but is everywhere in chains.

That's the Western way

would he say

look at me, karma

dharma

I should be in chains

but I am free.

*You in the West are expert in outer space*

*the arms race*

*But we, my people, know inner space.*

At the Ottawa Civic Centre

at noon on April 28, 2004,

you can buy popcorn and hot dogs and Diet  
Coke.

There are ten armed guards, 20 body  
guards and 10,000 strong, handlers, one translator and bored  
bureaucrats, Tibetans in traditional clothes,  
the girl who got up at 4 a.m. and took the bus from Montreal,  
and you.

You wonder if he read Jean-Jacques Rousseau

when he was the child lama

He meditates five hours a day

The Dalai Lama speaks in broken

English *Long life good...he smiles*

*but if life has no meaning, short life*

*better*

He does not speak of chains.

He is free.

He aims to free his people.

He does not hate the Chinese.

He speaks of home.

Four days after this talk, you meet a Tibetan refugee in Montreal.

Four months before, she opened a shop in the upscale grocery centre the Fauborg where she sells black and bright coloured cotton clothing from Nepal-- coral turquoise silver.

How big is the Tibetan community here? you ask

115.

She was born in Darjeeling.

Has never been to Tibet.

Is already a Canadian citizen.

And she has been to Ottawa,

been to sit with the Dalai Lama

her face, an open question.

You know what he is to his people? she asks.

Brown and blue eyes meet.

You both smile, nod in recognition.

You think about the French Revolution, guillotines.

Did you know that restaurants and hotelleries took off after Marie Antoinette lost her head?

All those out -of-work cooks, chefs, servants.

Cast out of Chateaux, houses, homes.

That s when Michelin introduced the Star system.

*trois etoiles...quatre etoiles...the coveted cinq.*

The Dalai Lama is a star here in Ottawa

alongside Alanis Morissette.

He doesn t care

cares completely

keeps his head

up.

After all,  
he kept his head  
even though he lost  
his country  
kept his people  
even though he lost  
one in six.

The Dalai Lama speaks in a strong voice  
long breaths   short  
sentences

He flips into Tibetan for anything  
ordinary   day to day those words filtered through the lips of his translator

You wonder if that is intentional  
refusing the banal  
don't wait for an answer

He fools fools with his simplicity  
Outwits journalists out to make  
a kill  
disarms attacks with humour  
an iron spine  
And maybe  
ten body guards

What would he say to Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
the philosopher his intense French intellect  
a black tobacco filterless

cigarette aglow in his left hand  
a glass of absinthe  
*Dialogue?*

What would the Dalai Lama say to Rousseau  
Each taking the other in  
Each lit by an inner light  
Dia logue .  
What is the dialogue when East meets west?  
What are the words

You don t know  
But you do know this: you don t want  
guillotines and baskets.  
*Les tricoteurs.*  
No more murdered nuns,  
levelled monasteries.

So you rise to your feet  
when the short talk is over

Get the Dalai Lama in your sight line  
you are ready, take aim  
and press your palms together hard  
trigger fingered  
Your hands married  
Thumbs now to your forehead  
for this man who has never surrendered  
refused all chains  
is fine



and say  
softly under your breath  
in the hockey hall din  
though you know he will find  
your prayer  
here where east meets west  
brown eyes meet blue

*Namaste.*

*Dialogue.*

Nod

*Namaste.*

*Dialogue.*

Nod